The Cleveland Museum of Art

Press Release

For Immediate Release
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CURATOR OF 19TH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTING APPOINTED

CLEVELAND — Kate M. Sellers, Deputy Director of the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA), today announced the appointment of Sylvain Bellenger as the museum's Curator of 19th-Century European Painting. This was the last appointment made by the late director Robert P. Bergman before his death. Dr. Bergman had said of the appointment: "We waited a long time to find the right person for this important curatorial position. Sylvain Bellenger will bring the expertise and experience in 19th-century art that we have been seeking."

The museum's 19th-century European painting collection, including works by the beloved French Impressionists, is renowned for its quality and depth: with more than 250 works, it is the largest collection within the CMA painting department. With the appointment of Mr. Bellenger to this newly created post, the department will be fully staffed with curators of old master, 19th-century, early 20th-century, and American painting.

A native of France, Mr. Bellenger has been Director of the Castle of Blois and Chief Curator of the Municipal Museums of Blois since 1992. He was hired for the post by Jack Lang, former French Minister of Culture and now Mayor of Blois and Deputy of the European Community. The castle, or chateau, is a major French historical monument; previously a royal castle, it became an art and history museum in 1842. Its royal apartments, fine arts museum, decorative arts collection, and archeological section attract some 400,000 visitors annually to the small medieval town of Blois in the Loire valley. During his tenure at Blois, Mr. Bellenger has initiated and overseen renovations of the museum and the royal chambers that provide visitors a fuller grasp of the Renaissance-to-19th-century sweep of the castle's history while calling attention to the major works of art on view.

He has also curated such exhibitions as *Blois, Theater on the Loire* (1994-95); *Felix Duban, The Colors of the Architect* (1996); *Auguste Préault* (1997); *Turner, The Journey on the Loire* (1998); and *François Mansart at Blois* (1998). Those exhibitions, organized with major European institutions, put Blois among the great organizers of exhibitions. This summer Mr. Bellenger is opening the large exhibition *The Treasures of the Medici*, organized with the Pitti Palace in Florence, the Haus der Kunst in Munich, the Kunsthalle, Berlin, and the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna; it will focus on works that once belonged to Catherine of Medici, queen of France, who died at Blois.

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Mr. Bellenger obtained his Maîtrise in Philosophy from the University of Paris X, the Diploma of "Ancien élève de l'École du Louvre," and the Maîtrise and Doctorate in the History of Art from the University of Paris IV Sorbonne with a thesis on *The Workshop of François Edouard Picot*. He worked at Paris's Musée d'Orsay and the Louvre, and at the Museum of Art in Senlis and the Girodet Museum in Montargis near Paris, before his appointment at Blois. He has received critical acclaim for quality in acquisitions in 19th-century paintings both at Blois and at Montargis. Mr. Bellenger has held fellowships at the École Française in Rome, Yale University, and most recently at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Commenting on his appointment to the CMA staff, Mr. Bellenger stated, "I am delighted to join the team of this great museum and work with its distinguished collection. I hope to curate exhibitions that meet Cleveland's scholarly standards and visitor-centered goals. I am very impressed with the city and enthusiastic about my move to America." Mr. Bellenger will move to Cleveland by November 1, 1999.

The 19th-century European paintings collection at CMA has recently been published in a two-volume catalogue that is now available. [See enclosed release on new collection catalogues.]

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